

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the last full paragraph on page 3 continuing to top of page 4, with the following:

It is advantageous that the sheet members used in the present invention have air impermeability. It is difficult to fix the sheet members of this type by vacuum suction. The sheet members are slippery due to the air present between the sheet members. However, most materials of the sheet members having air impermeability, such as vinyl chloride, synthetic leather, nylon, or polyester are easily fused by heat, and welded easily. Thus, in the present invention, [[eve]] even if the sheet members having air impermeability which cannot be fixed easily are used, the sheet members are stacked vertically, and it is possible to cut the sheet members accurately.

Please replace the 2nd full paragraph on page 5 with the following:

FIG. 2 shows a cutting algorithm according to the embodiment. In step s1, a cutting pattern is generated. In step s2, a method of fixing the sheet members is selected. As the method of fixing the sheet members, a "welding method" and a "partial cutting method" can be used. In the welding method, the sheet members are welded together vertically. In the "partial cutting method", uncut portions are provided at several positions along the cutting line. Further, it is possible to select another method in which neither the welding method nor the partial cutting method is carried out, and the sheet members are fixed only by vacuum suction. In the case of the welding method or the partial cutting method, vacuum suction is also carried

out. The method selection of "welding", "partial cutting", or "other (vacuum suction only)" may be carried out manually by inputting the selected method into the control unit, or carried out automatically based on the data such as the material of the sheet members, the cutting pattern, or the like.

Please replace the 1st full paragraph on page 6 with the following:

In the case of welding, the vertically stacked sheet members are welded together near the cutting line, i.e., in the seam allowance inside the cutting line, along the cutting line, or in a region outside the cutting line. The knife or the punch provided for the cutting head is used for welding. For example, the knife pierces the stacked sheet members at the welding position until the knife passes through many of the sheet members. By moving the knife at the same position vertically at high speed, the sheet members are welded together vertically by the frictional heat. In the case of using a punch like a drill, the punch is rotated to move downwardly into the stacked sheet members until the punch passes through many of the sheet members. The punch is rotated at the position to perform welding by the frictional heat. The word "many" herein means the number of the sheet members corresponding to about 1/2 to 3/4 of the thickness of the stacked sheet members. In the case of using a punch like a knife, in the same manner as in the case of the cutting knife, the sheet members are welded together by moving the punch which has pierced into the stacked sheet members at high speed (step s3). After welding, the cutting is carried out (step s4). It is not necessary to carry out welding at several positions corresponding to the entire circumference of one part beforehand. In one method, after welding is carried out at one position for cutting one line, welding is carried out,

e.g., at one position for the next line, and the line is cut. In the case of providing uncut portions, the cutting pattern is changed to add uncut portions at several positions along the cutting line (step s5). Then, the cutting is performed (step s6). Finally, the uncut portions are cut (step s7). The welding method and the partial cutting method can be used in combination. In this case, it is assumed that both of the welding method and the partial cutting method are selected in the algorithm algorithm.